

**Important Notice of Prescription Drug Creditable Coverage  
From North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund**

October 2022

To All Employees and Dependents:

This Notice is being sent to inform you of how your benefits through *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* are affected by Medicare Part D. It is being sent to all participants, even though it applies only to those eligible for Medicare, or who may become eligible for Medicare in the next 12 months. Medicare prescription drug coverage, referred to as "Medicare Part D," became available in 2006 to everyone with Medicare through Medicare prescription drug plans and Medicare Advantage plans that offer prescription drug coverage. All Medicare prescription drug plans will provide at least a standard level of coverage set by Medicare. Some plans offered by independent insurance companies might offer more coverage for a higher monthly premium.

***The following information is provided to help you decide whether it would benefit you to enroll in Medicare Part D for prescription drug coverage.***

*North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* Trustees have determined that your current prescription drug coverage is "creditable coverage," which means that it is, on average for all Fund participants, expected to pay out as much or more than the standard Medicare prescription drug coverage. Since you have prescription drug coverage through *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund*, the most cost-effective option for you, generally, is to **not** enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan unless you are eligible for extra help from Medicare for persons with low income. Joining a Medicare prescription drug plan **will not** reduce the monthly self-payment required by *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* because your current self-payment is for both medical and prescription drug expenses.

Retirees with limited income may be eligible for financial support from the government to help pay for the Medicare prescription drug plan. Information about this extra help is available from the Social Security Administration (SSA) online at: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), or you can call them at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). If you are eligible for special assistance, you should review your options carefully because it may be beneficial for you to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan.

Individuals can enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan when they first become eligible for Medicare and each year from October 15<sup>th</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup>. However, if you lose your current creditable prescription drug coverage, through no fault of your own, you will be eligible for a two-month Special Enrollment Period (SEP) to join a Medicare prescription drug plan. In addition, if you lose or decide to leave employer/union-sponsored coverage, you will be eligible to join a Medicare prescription drug plan at that time using an Employer Group Special Enrollment Period.

**Will the *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* continue to offer prescription drug coverage?**

Yes. The Fund will continue to provide prescription drug coverage for all participants and dependents who are eligible for this coverage under the terms of the Plan Document. For eligible active participants and eligible pre-Medicare retirees, the Plan provides this coverage through its benefit program. For eligible Medicare retirees, the Plan provides this coverage through a group Medicare Advantage program.

**Will your current coverage through *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* be affected if you join a Medicare prescription drug plan?**

Yes. Your Medicare prescription drug plan will become the payer for your prescription drug benefits, unless you are covered under an Active Plan through *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund*, in which case the Fund remains the primary payer. Please be aware that if you enroll in another Medicare prescription drug plan, your coverage under the *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund's* group Medicare Advantage Plan (MAPD) will be terminated, and you will lose access to all benefits offered under the MAPD.

**Will Medicare penalize participants who do not enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan?**

Because coverage through *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* is creditable coverage, you will not have to pay a penalty if you enroll later, provided you do not go 63 days or longer without creditable coverage.

If you do go 63 days or longer without creditable coverage, your monthly premium may go up at least 1% of the Medicare base beneficiary premium per month for every month that you did not have creditable coverage. For example, if you go 19 months without creditable coverage before enrolling in a Medicare prescription drug plan, your premium always may be at least 19% higher than the Medicare base beneficiary premium. You may have to pay this higher premium as long as you have Medicare prescription drug coverage. In addition, you may have to wait until the following October to enroll.

**What will happen if you drop your *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund* coverage?**

In addition to prescription drug benefits, your current Fund coverage provides medical benefits, death benefits, and optional dental and vision benefits. None of these benefits are available separately, so if you decide to drop your Fund coverage, ALL Fund benefits will terminate. If you drop your coverage through the Fund, you will need to obtain coverage elsewhere for ALL your benefits, not just prescription drugs. We cannot guarantee that in all cases our prescription drug coverage is more advantageous than Medicare prescription drug coverage, although it generally will be. You must ultimately decide for yourself which program offers the better coverage at the most affordable price. You should compare your current Fund coverage, including which drugs are covered at what cost, with the coverage and cost of the plans offering Medicare prescription drug coverage in your area. If you drop your coverage with *North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund*, you cannot reinstate in the Fund's Retiree Program at a later date

unless you qualify for the one-time waiver/reinstatement provision described in the Summary Plan Description/Plan Document (SPD/PD).

**Where can you find information about this Notice or your current prescription drug coverage through North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters' Health Fund?**

Please refer to your SPD/PD for information on your current prescription drug coverage or call the Fund Office at (715) 835-3174 or 1-800-424-3405. NOTE: You will receive this Notice annually, and at other times in the future, such as before future periods during which you can enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage, and if our Plan's coverage changes. You also may request a copy of this Notice at any time.

**Where can you find information on Medicare prescription drug coverage?**

The following resources are available to explain your options and help you make your decision:

- *Medicare & You* Handbook, which should be mailed to you every year in October, or you can download an electronic version of the Handbook by visiting: [www.medicare.gov/gopaperless](http://www.medicare.gov/gopaperless).
- Visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) for personalized help. An online Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder tool will be available on this website.
- Call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (see your copy of the *Medicare & You* Handbook for their telephone number).
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

**Keep this Notice of Prescription Drug Creditable Coverage. If you enroll in one of the Medicare prescription drug plans, you may need to give a copy of this Notice when you join to show that you are not required to pay a higher premium amount. An updated Notice will be provided to you annually. However, upon receipt of the updated Notice, DO NOT THROW AWAY PRIOR NOTICES! You may need them in a future year to prove you had creditable coverage in a specific time period.**

If you have any questions, please call the Fund Office at (715) 835-3174 or 1-800-424-3405.

Yours very truly,

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES